

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration and withdrawal of the objections and rejection set forth in the above-mentioned Official Action in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks are respectfully requested.

Title

The title has been objected to as not being descriptive. In response, a new title, which is more clearly indicative of the claimed invention, is presented herein for the Examiner's consideration and approval.

Claims Status

Claims 1 through 3 and 5 through 18 are now pending in the application. Claim 4 has been canceled. Claims 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, and 10 through 12 have been amended to even more succinctly define the invention and/or to improve their form. Claims 13 through 18 have been added to accord Applicants an additional scope of protection commensurate with the disclosure. It is respectfully submitted that no new matter has been added. Claims 1, 10, and 13 are the only independent claims pending in the application.

Allowable Subject Matter

It is acknowledged with appreciation that Claims 4 through 10 are merely objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claims and any intervening claims.

Claim 1 has been amended to include the allowable subject matter of Claim 4, which has been canceled.

Claim 10 has been rewritten in independent form.

It is respectfully submitted that the objection to these claims has been overcome.

Art Rejection

Claims 1 through 3, 11, and 12 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,505,021 (Shibuya, et al.) in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,483,327 (Taya, et al.).

The rationale underlying the foregoing rejection is succinctly set forth in the Official Action.

Response to Rejection

Without conceding the propriety of the rejection and solely to expedite prosecution, Claim 1 has been amended to include the allowable subject matter of Claim 4 as above-noted. Accordingly, amended Claim 1 should be allowable over the cited art and further comment on the rejection is not warranted.

Newly Presented Claims

Independent Claim 13 has been formulated on the basis of original Claims 1 and 4. More specifically, Claim 13 calls for an image bearing member, developing means, and a transfer member as recited in original Claims 1 and 4. (Original Claim 1 calls for a plurality of image forming means, each of which includes an image bearing member, developing means, and a transfer member.)

Dependent Claims

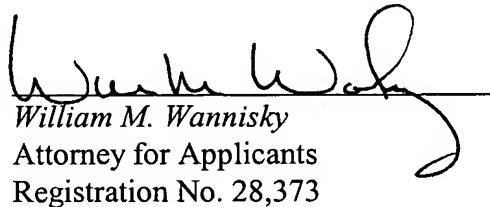
Claims 2, 3, 11, 12, and 14 through 18 depend either directly or indirectly from one of Claims 1, 10, and 13 and are allowable by virtue of their dependency and in their own right for further defining Applicants' invention. Individual consideration of the dependent claims is respectfully requested.

Closing Comments

It is respectfully submitted that the claims on file are allowable over the art of record and that the application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and early passage to issue of the present application are earnestly solicited.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our New York office at the address shown below.

Respectfully submitted,



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